



News Release

For immediate release: November 17, 2014

(14-170)

Contacts: [Joby Winans](#), Communications Office

360-236-4077

Ebola Preparedness Continues in Washington Hospitals

OLYMPIA — Preparations for identifying, isolating, evaluating and treating patients with suspected or confirmed Ebola virus disease in Washington continues, even though the likelihood of the virus appearing in the state is still considered low.

Using guidelines established by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), hospitals throughout the state are making plans to rapidly identify, isolate and safely evaluate people with suspected Ebola.

In addition to standard preparation for screening and identification, eight hospitals have committed to working towards the level of preparation that is required for the ongoing care and treatment of a patient with Ebola, as needed. CHI Franciscan Health (Harrison Medical Center – Bremerton campus), MultiCare Tacoma General Hospital, Providence Regional Medical Center Everett, Providence Sacred Heart Medical Center and Children’s Hospital in Spokane, Seattle Children’s Hospital, Swedish Medical Center (Issaquah), Virginia Mason Hospital, and UW Medicine (Harborview Medical Center, UW Medical Center, Valley Medical Center) are taking additional steps in their preparedness activities to provide that care.

These eight hospitals are preparing to care for a person with Ebola for the duration of the illness, but all hospitals across Washington have to be ready to identify and initially care for a patient who presents with possible Ebola infection. Hospitals in Washington will continue to train and drill appropriate staff.

“The chance of a confirmed case of Ebola in Washington is very low, but in the event it happens we want to be sure we have the capacity to provide ongoing care to a patient,” said Dr. Kathy Lofy, state Health Officer. “Patients with Ebola can become critically ill and require intensive care therapy. Care needs to be delivered using strict infection control practices. We are working

with each of the committed hospitals to ensure we are coordinated and thorough in our response.”

The hospitals are working to meet the CDC guidelines for Ebola treatment facilities which include: providing intensive training to staff, evaluating and preparing space, ensuring an adequate supply of personal protective equipment, planning for waste storage and disposal, and developing contingency plans. Hospitals will drill their plans and procedures for treating a possible Ebola patient through their course of illness. The CDC will send a team to assist facilities in their preparations to provide Ebola patient care safely and effectively.

“The chance of an outbreak of Ebola in Washington is low, but we have to have the ‘When, not if mindset,’” said Scott Bond, Chief Executive Officer of the Washington State Hospital Association. “As a state we want to be sure we have the capacity to provide care for as many people as necessary and to do so without endangering staff and the public. The Department of Health has shown great leadership in coordinating a statewide response and supporting the work being done by the local public health agencies.”

Secretary of Health John Wiesman said, “I am proud of these hospitals for stepping up to the challenge to ensure that Washington State is prepared. It requires a comprehensive and highly coordinated effort that relies on many doctors, nurses and support staff to provide safe and quality care for an Ebola patient. Washington’s health care professionals are to be applauded for their professionalism and commitment.”

The threat of exposure to the Ebola virus remains low. Anyone arriving in Seattle from West Africa has passed through airports that assess risk. Public health will perform temperature and symptom monitoring of potentially exposed individuals during the 21 day incubation period. Because individuals are not infectious until they develop symptoms actively monitoring for symptoms will rapidly identify anyone who has contracted Ebola and allow isolation before he or she is able to infect someone else with the virus. In the event a case is confirmed the CDC will send a team to assist the hospitals in providing care safely and effectively.

###